

## CHAPTER 16

### QUESTION TWO:

# Why Might I be Unwilling to Do What I Say I Want?

“Each of us guards a gate of change  
that can only be opened from the inside...” —*Marilyn Ferguson*

YOU JUST CREATED AND WROTE DOWN your answers to the first question: What’s my intention? Now it is time to make sure that all parts of you are aligned with that intention and moving in the same direction.

“Why might ‘unwillingness’ be such an issue?” you ask. After all, you’ve just spent hours crafting and writing down your intentions! Question Two seems to more than insinuate a serious self-imposed block on your part. Don’t be offended: let me explain.

As I said earlier, most psychologists agree that we humans are always doing what we perceive to be in our best interests. When we resist advice, or even when we resist our own positive intentions, there is generally good reason. We simply don’t always know what that reason is. We may not be aware of the undercurrents of wisdom, fear, or needs that drive our hesitation to step out into “the new.” If you continue to say you want something different than what you have, and you do nothing about it, you at least owe yourself an inquiry into what may be holding you back. Consider the wisdom and insights that will result from your inquiry as the gifts of this chapter.

One element of maturity is the ability to take deep responsibility for every aspect of our lives—including unconscious habits, beliefs and desires. “Taking deep responsibility” means we acknowledge that whatever we are doing or not doing in this life is our choice—at some level. That bears repeating:

“Taking deep responsibility” means we acknowledge that whatever we are doing or not doing in this life is our choice—at some level. It’s quite freeing to take that responsibility. Being responsible for the results we get in life puts us entirely in charge. We can change what we are doing or not doing and get some different results!

Question Two gives you the opportunity to tell your own truth about what's going on. This question invites you to be more clear with yourself about your willingness to actually manifest what you want. Are there doubts and fears negating, sabotaging or energetically blocking the full spirit of your intention?

This is not gratuitous mucking around in the psyche. Imagine that you seek to go somewhere, and one leg takes off in one direction and the other in the opposite. You wouldn't get very far very fast. Conflicting energies hold you back in the same way. Your intention is going in one direction; your fear leads you in another, albeit unconsciously. You need to get acquainted with your conflicting energies. They are not blameworthy—they just are. Once you access your own truth about the matter, the conflict is usually address-able, given your deep commitment to do more of what you love in your life.

It is always worth a check—a “willingness check,” if you will—to make sure all of your energies are engaged in pursuing the Intentions that you lay out for yourself. If you are like most people who are formulating bold new plans, you have already noticed some fears and doubts. Becoming more aware of your objections is sort of like preparing for company: you pick up and put away the children's toys in the living room, which you have always detoured around, but which might trip up an unsuspecting guest.

Here's a true example of how this willingness check works.

Susan was an insurance broker. She loved her business, and loved providing her clients with peace of mind. She was personable, competent, disciplined and enthusiastic. And she wanted to attract and serve more clients.

When Susan probed herself with the question: “Why might I be unwilling?” she was surprised to find that one of the answers was, “It isn't OK for me to earn more money than my father did.” Some would call that an energetic script; others would label it an “old belief needing to be updated.” Whatever the label, it sets up a conflict.

Susan had determined at an earlier time in her life that outpacing her father financially would dismiss his accomplishments in some way. That early conclusion operated as a very effective saboteur of her own efforts to grow.

Being willing to discover, take responsibility for, and “own” conclusions you have made under earlier circumstances means you can also update them. Although astonished at the content of her inner objection, Susan also recognized the truth of it. She decided it would be true no longer. She realized that she could be loyal and respectful to her father by being as successful as he would have wanted her to be.

With that refreshed conclusion, Susan broke through her self-imposed ceiling, her “unwillingness.” She no longer needed to cap her desire to provide peace of mind to a larger number of people through customized insurance products. Her business started growing immediately.

Susan’s is just one example of unwillingness. As long as her old belief remained operative in some corner of her mind, it blocked her sincere intentions to build a larger practice. Fortunately, she was able to transform the identified unwillingness into a new way of looking at her situation. She was free to achieve as much as she wished. You can do the same.

By discovering and neutralizing your internal blocks and updating them for your present circumstances, your willingness will be free to expand. You will discover that it is suddenly much easier to bring your Intentions to life and achieve your goals.

Unwillingness, in whatever form it may take, is yours to acknowledge, neutralize, update, and release, so that all of your energy is ready to move forward in the direction you intend.

So, here we go...

## **WHY MIGHT I BE UNWILLING?**

### **How to work with this question**

This question requires dedicating some time and sitting down, whether it be under a tree in the park, or in a part of your home where you will not be disturbed. Before you start, be sure to gather a pen or pencil, and a pad of lined paper. For this process, I strongly encourage you to follow the steps below in sequence.

1. Make sure your statement of intent is articulated with brevity, confidence and power. If it isn’t, rework it until it is.
2. When it is, write it down at the top of the page.
3. Ask yourself “Why might I be unwilling to do, be, or have \_\_\_\_\_?” Number and record your answers in the order in which they come to your mind, without censorship. If you have a friend or a coach, that person can repeatedly ask you the question and record your answers so you are completely free to respond spontaneously.
4. Keep repeating the question. You will know you’ve hit paydirt when you feel a charge of connection in your body. Sometimes that happens at answer number five, or number

12, or number 26. Sometimes it doesn't even come on the first day. You may need to let the challenge of this question percolate within you for a while.

5. Notice that some of what comes up may be embarrassing to admit, but stay with it: there very well may be a crucial nugget of wisdom hidden there. Whatever it is, it is. And you need to know about it.

6. You may need a clear-minded helper to assist you to allow and accept difficult answers, whatever they are. Invite your unconscious to offer words or images, and welcome whatever comes, including the surprises. Those often provide the biggest payoff.

7. Keep probing with new ways to ask the same question. Go deeper. If your answer on the initial round is: "I don't know..." ask again: Why might I be unwilling to know what is holding me back?

- Why might I be unwilling to move ahead on what I have said I wanted to do in my life?
- Why might I be unwilling to take a stand in my workplace for more "green" practices?
- Why might I be unwilling to seek training for the professional certification I've always wanted to have?
- Why might I be unwilling to experiment on a part-time basis with this new idea I have?

8. Sometimes it helps to probe by completing the sentences below:

I might be afraid that...

I might not deserve that... I might not be capable of... I might not know how to...

I might not be safe if...

9. Sometimes the probing can take a different tack:

I'm concerned my father/mother would think... I'm concerned my spouse/partner would think... I'm concerned my boss/colleagues would think...

The fear that holds me back is...

The bottom line, here, is something that I've said before: People most often do what they perceive to be in their best interest. That means you can assume that, at some level, you have a very logical reason for doing or not doing what you intend for yourself.

Remember the earlier example of Susan, who feared that if she grew her business according to her goals, she would be dishonoring the memory of her father. Performing a "willingness check" allows you to ferret out hidden reasons for your hesitancy to move forward. Once you have these nuggets, new wisdom and new perspectives will emerge, and you will be freer and more able to move forward with your Calling.

### **Common pitfalls—in no particular order**

- Censuring serendipitous answers that don't fit with your view of yourself. The actual "truth" of your reluctance is often embarrassing to admit. You can count on it. (Look back at the example of Susan.) Allow and invite any embarrassment that accompanies your inquiry. It is what it is. Delight that you have found a key puzzle piece to unlocking your own possibilities. Although the idea of your believing x, y, or z may be unwelcome, you can deliberately rejoice that you've found something very important to address for your present and future success.
- Stopping short of necessary probing. For some reason, people think they've done enough, and can't find anything interesting. Asking and answering the question is getting boring. I urge you not stop the process of asking and answering this question too soon. Answer the question at least 10 times, until something juicy and unexpected pops up. One of my students found their nugget of gold at answer 26. Be creative in continuing to ask the question in different ways. For instance, if one of your answers on the first round is "because I don't have time," ask the question differently: "So why am I unwilling to make time for this?" Keep going deeper and deeper. A charge in your body will tell you when you hit pay dirt.
- Investing too heavily in getting it "right." Pay attention to any sense of desperation to be, do, or have what you want. In the same way, be patient with your efforts to solve your "problem," or to uncover your unwillingness.

The questions are intentionally repetitive and overlapping. When you are really ready, the answers will appear to you. Be gentle with yourself. As Tara Brach, a Buddhist teacher, reminds us: “Our most direct way of promoting healing and peace is to become mindful of our habits of judging and blaming.” Allow yourself to be slow, confused, or even “wrong” along the way.

## **Summarize your “unwillingness” as best you can**

Question Three, our next in this series, will help you resolve your objections. To prepare for this step, it’s important to be as clear as you can be about how your current unwillingness blocks you from moving forward. Make a simple, crisp, and succinct summary statement. Be very specific—as embarrassing as it might be. These templates may assist you.

- The reason I’m not doing what I say I want to do more of is my fear that...
- The reason I’m not doing what I say I want to do more of is my belief that...
- The reason I’m not doing what I say I want to do more of is my belief that I am not worthy to....
- The reason I’m not doing what I say I want to do more of is my belief that I don’t know how to...
- The reason I’m not doing what I say I want to do more of is my belief that I don’t deserve to...

Don’t overlook the real possibility that the reason you’re not doing what you say you want to do more of....is...actually, deeply, that it is not truly your calling in the world. You may still be working inadvertently with “shoulds” and “oughts” of the past, rather than your true gifts. If that explanation rings true as a reason, rather than as an excuse, sit with it. Be gentle with yourself. Out of that acceptance may spring a new direction for your inquiry.

Having illuminated the misalignments, the blocks, the objections, or the “unwillingnesses,” you have made an important step in preparing to let them go. It is important to honor their existence. It is also important to have compassion for yourself for the blocks and barriers you have encountered. After all, you are human. These old beliefs, energetic scripts, or obstacles that you have just named are very powerful.

They've had a role in your life, and you can decide to what extent you want them to continue to have such an influential role in the new life you are designing for yourself.

As we come to the end of this chapter, I am aware that a small number of readers may find themselves choosing to back away from doing more of what they love, or from serving in ways that would nourish them. If you are one of those, relax. Allow that the objections you uncovered may be overwhelming and scary. If that is so, at least you can retreat with more awareness of the conflicts you feel, and with the possibility of reevaluating your choice at a later time. Whether you move forward or take another pause with what you have learned in this chapter, please allow your insights to continue to open new doors for your explorations.

In the next chapter, we will look at those objections with new eyes. As Dianne Connolly, co-founder of Tai Sophia, has always said: "Conclusions [read beliefs, objections, or closely held perspectives] are a necessity. They close or open life for ourselves and others. The key is to be awake to them, and to notice that **they are only one way of looking at things.**"

This Chapter 16 was abstracted from the book *Why Not Do What You Love?* by Martha Johnson, updated February 2014.